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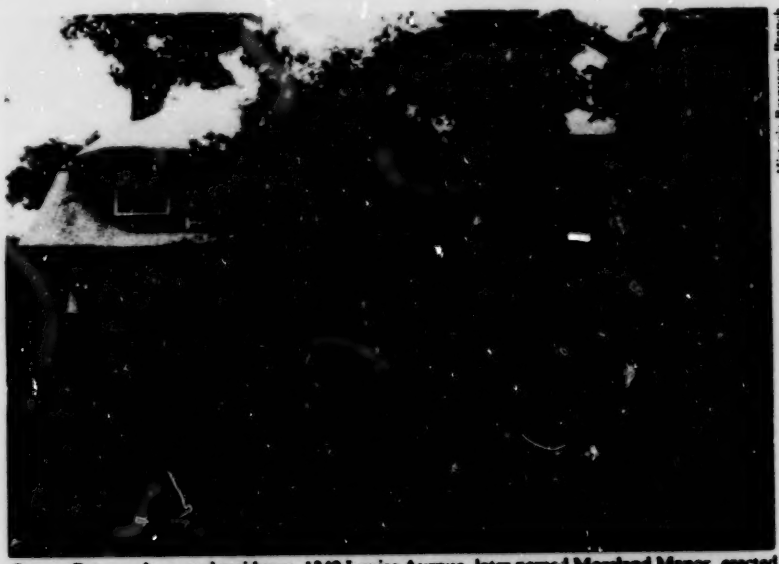
# Paterson/Matheson House
# Brandon

## Introduction

The Paterson/Matheson House, 1039 Louise Avenue, Brandon, was erected in 1893 for George A. Paterson, a prominent Brandon citizen. An electrician by trade, Paterson was appointed General Manager of the Brandon Electric Light Company in 1894 and subsequently was the head of other Brandon utility companies. The house, built by William Bell and Sons of Brandon at a cost of $3,600.00, featured a very handsome verandah and tower balcony executed in the Eastlake style of architecture. The complex verandah, with its ball spindles, carved posts and gingerbread trim, is an unusually ornate feature among Brandon's residences and the house has become a unique local landmark. Norman A. Matheson, a Souris lumber merchant, acquired the house in 1967 and donated it in 1969 to its present owner, the Western Region Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba. The elaborate verandah has been restored to its former beauty and the Paterson/Matheson House remains as a splendid example of the Eastlake style of architecture in Manitoba. In 1984 the Paterson/Matheson House was designated by the Province of Manitoba as an historic site.



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George Paterson's second residence, 1340 Louise Avenue, later named Moreland Manor, erected 1913.

## The Paterson/Matheson House

Before a building was ever constructed at 1039 Louise, the property itself changed hands a number of times, at one point being owned by William B. Scarth, President and Managing Director of the Canada and North West Land Company. This com-

pany was one of Canada's largest land corporations operating during the 1880s, one of the most hectic periods of immigration and settlement in Western Canada.

In October, 1891, Lots 29 and 30 were purchased from Scarth by two Brandon residents: George Bell of the Bell Brothers Contracting Firm, founder of Brandon's earliest and most successful construction company, and George A. Paterson, an electrician with the Brandon Electric Light Company, the city's earliest local light and power utility. Paterson became the registered owner of Lots 29 and 30 in May, 1892. During this period Paterson was courting William Bell's daughter, Margaret and in July, 1892, they were married. The couple eventually moved into the house at 1039 Louise which Paterson and his father-in-law completed in 1893.

George Paterson, his wife and four daughters lived at 1039 Louise until 1913, when they moved to a new and larger home at 1340 Louise Avenue, later named Moreland Manor. The first Paterson house subsequently became the home of George Williamson, a Winnipeg real estate agent. In 1942 the house was purchased by Dr. Wilfred A. Bigelow of Brandon, who sold it to Norman Matheson in 1967.

**George Paterson**

George A. Paterson was born in Kingston, Ontario in 1868, and, with the rest of his family, travelled west to Winnipeg in 1872. He and his two brothers, Francis and Harry, were educated in several Winnipeg schools including Manitoba College. The Paterson brothers moved to Brandon in the mid-1880s where all three found employment with the Canadian Pacific Railway Telegraph Office. George, an electrician by trade, rose to become one of Brandon's most prominent and wealthy citizens.

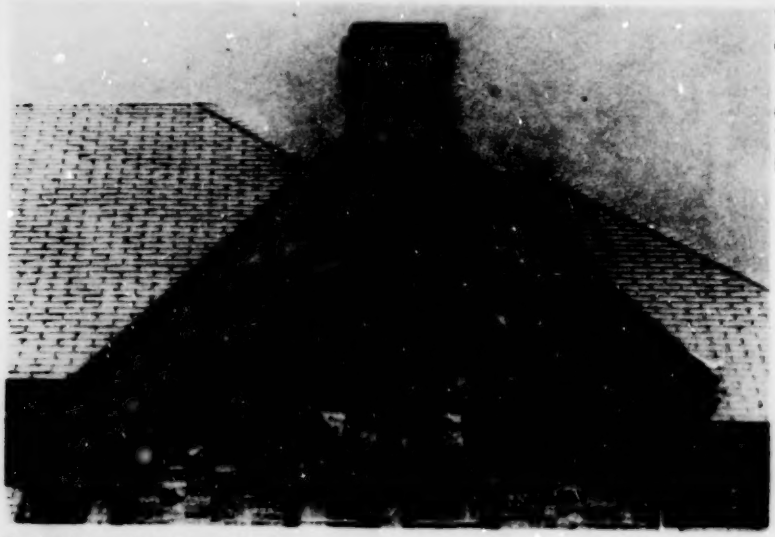
Paterson was not one of the handful of Brandon's commercial and business entrepreneurs that founded the Brandon Electric Light Company in 1889, but he quickly gained prominence in the Company and by 1894 was appointed General Manager. The Brandon Electric Light Company provided electricity and heat for residential and commercial purposes. In 1909, a second public utility, the Brandon Gas and Power Company began to provide steam heat for the city. Paterson became Managing Director and Vice President of this company in 1913. In 1917 the Brandon Electric Light Company merged with Brandon Gas and Power and was subsequently purchased by an American corporation under the name of the Canada Gas and Power Company. Paterson remained as the General Manager for this, Brandon's newest power utility, and retained this position until 1930 when the company was purchased by the Manitoba Power Commission.

Paterson's interests were not limited to his professional involvement with the Brandon Electric Light Company. He was also familiar with the construction trade and, besides his first house, was responsible for another of Brandon's most impressive residences. In 1913 Paterson and his father-in-law built the former's second home at 1340 Louise Avenue, according to plans Paterson had obtained in Vancouver. Paterson was also the architect and contractor for three identical brick bungalows on 8th Street.

**The Architecture of the Paterson/Matheson House**

When constructed in 1893, the house was an 18 foot by 38 foot (5.5 m x 11.6 m) brick veneer dwelling which stood two-and-one-half storeys in height, with a complex hip roof. Adorning this roof were cross-gables as well as a pedimented dormer on the west side. The dwelling was animated with numerous brick details, such as arched moldings above the windows, a string course, and semi-circular decorations

within the gables. Wooden decorative elements, however, were the key to the grandeur of this residence; for its main charm lay in the elaborate verandah, commodious circular balcony with peaked roof and the ornate "gingerbread" trim of the gables.



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Detail of bargeboard, west facade.

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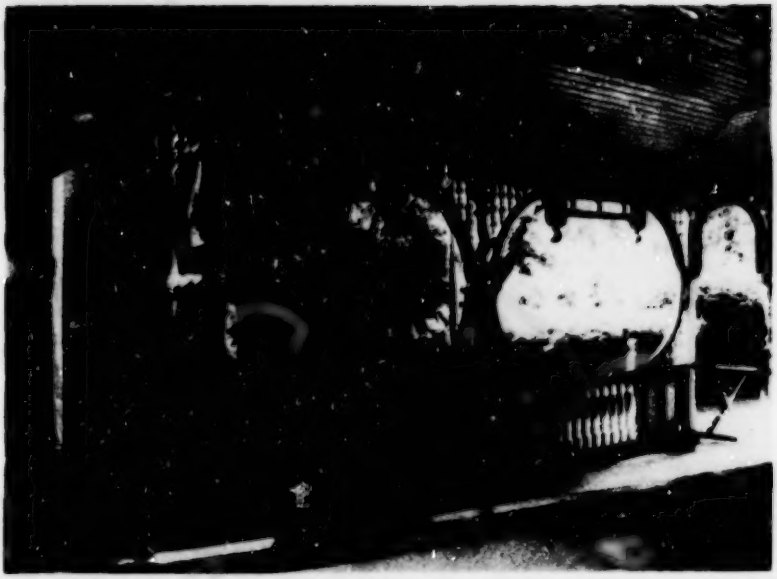
Detail of dormer, west facade.



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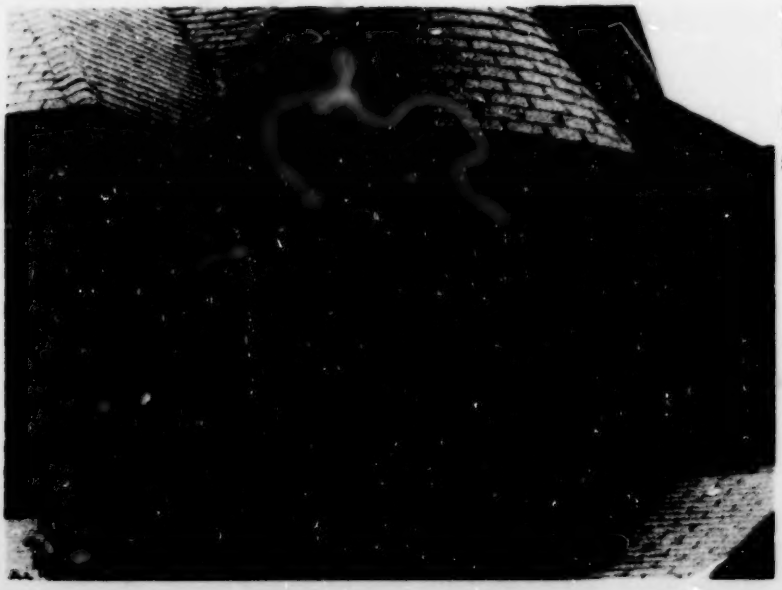
**Detail of verandah.**



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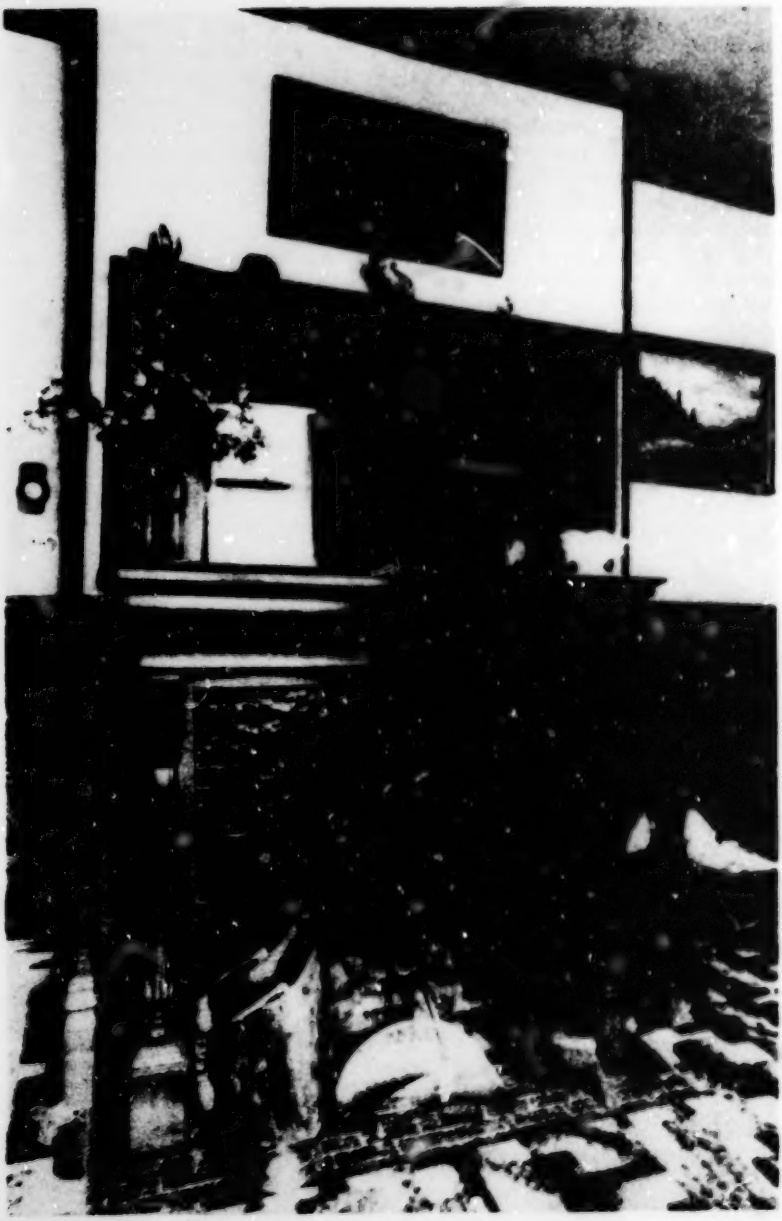
**Detail of second floor balcony.**

During 1904, a matching brick-veneered addition, designed by George Paterson and constructed by William Bell for a cost of $1,500.00 was made to the north end (rear) of this building to bring it up to its present dimensions. In terms of its interior, this structure possesses many original features such as mantles, a staircase and other carved wood fancywork, though much of its fine interior finishing probably dates from 1904 when the addition was made. At the head of the staircase is a handsome stained-glass window. Entitled "Listening," or "Listening to the Fairies," the windows depicts a young woman sitting in the pastoral splendour of a bower of flowers, trees, and other herbage. It was designed by the noted stained-glass artist, John Allward (1856-1929) who came to Winnipeg in 1903, and had been a pupil of John LaFarge, the eminent painter. Allward exhibited the window at the 1904 Dominion Fair held at Winnipeg and at the 1906 Manitoba Agricultural Industrial Exhibition, where it won the City of Winnipeg's Medal of Merit. This window is considered by Allward's family to be one of his finer works, with its elegant Art Nouveau motifs surrounding the portrait.

Detail of fireplace surround, main floor foyer.



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**Fireplace, main floor foyer.**

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**Detail of staircase.**

The house itself is an excellent example of how an otherwise ordinary-looking brick-veneer house of the late nineteenth century could be turned into something quite extraordinary and spectacular through the use of exotic ornamental architectural details. The advent of mass-produced building components such as verandah posts, ball spindles, brackets and "gingerbread" type gable decorations gave late Victorian residences and indeed the whole streetscape of that era a whimsical appearance. This particular house is in the Eastlake style of architecture, a popular decorative style of ornamentation found on houses frequently of various other styles such as the Queen Anne style. It was named after Charles Locke Eastlake (1836-1906), an English architect whose furniture designs in *Hints of Household Taste* inspired an architectural following in America, that Eastlake himself condemned.

Courtesy Manitoba Archives

Arthur Wellington Ross Residence, Winnipeg, erected 1882-1883, demolished 1933.

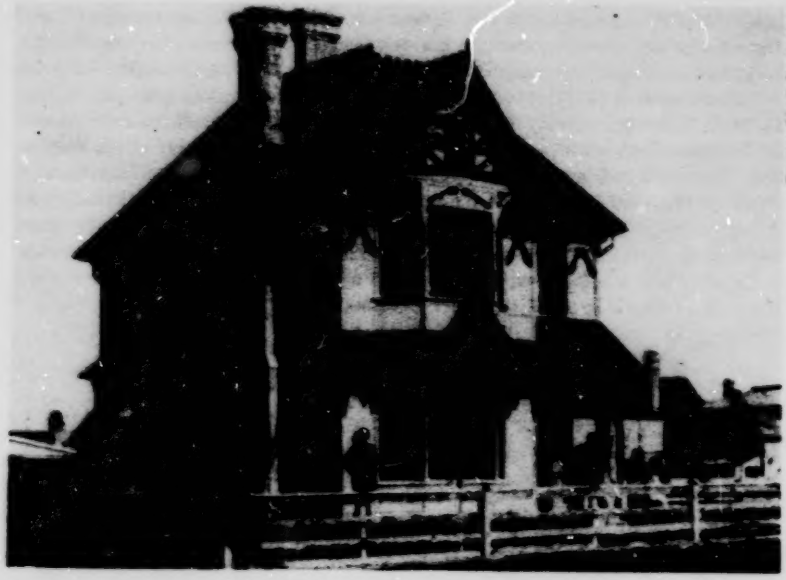
Eastlake style buildings are distinguished by a type of ornament fundamentally different from the two dimensional gingerbread of other Victorian styles and are the product of the chisel, gouge and lathe. Borrowed as they are from furniture, the decorative components of the Eastlake style bear a strong resemblance to table and chair legs and even door knobs. The verandah of the Paterson/Matheson house is a beautiful expression of this particular sensibility. The more common Queen Anne style of architecture is characterized by an irregularity in both elevation and plan and by a variety of colour and texture in building materials.

In Manitoba, the Queen Anne style and the Eastlake style were both popular during the 1880s and 1890s. The styles were used and sometimes combined for a number of Winnipeg homes. The Arthur Wellington Ross Residence, (erected

1882-1883; demolished 1933) was designed by architects Walter Chesterton and Robert McNicol. Though somewhat heavy in massing and bizzare in appearance, this residence was a good example of the Queen Anne style. The James H. Ashdown Residence (erected 1877-1878; demolished c1960) was designed by architect Thomas H. Parr. This was probably the first house in Winnipeg to bear the intricate fancies of the Eastlake style. This was especially evident in the gable gingerbread, the bracket-work below the roof and the ornamentation about the windows. The T.M. Quigley Residence (erected 1883; demolished 1941) was designed by architects J.H. Rowan and C.H. Payne. This building had elements from other styles, but nonetheless, bore the bracket-work and gingerbread effect of the Eastlake style. Cowles' Residence (erected c1891) is a well-preserved example of the Eastlake style notable for the intricacy of detailing of its expansive L-shaped verandah.

Courtesy Manitoba Archives

James H. Ashdown Residence, Winnipeg, erected 1877-1878, demolished c1960.



Courtesy Manitoba Archives

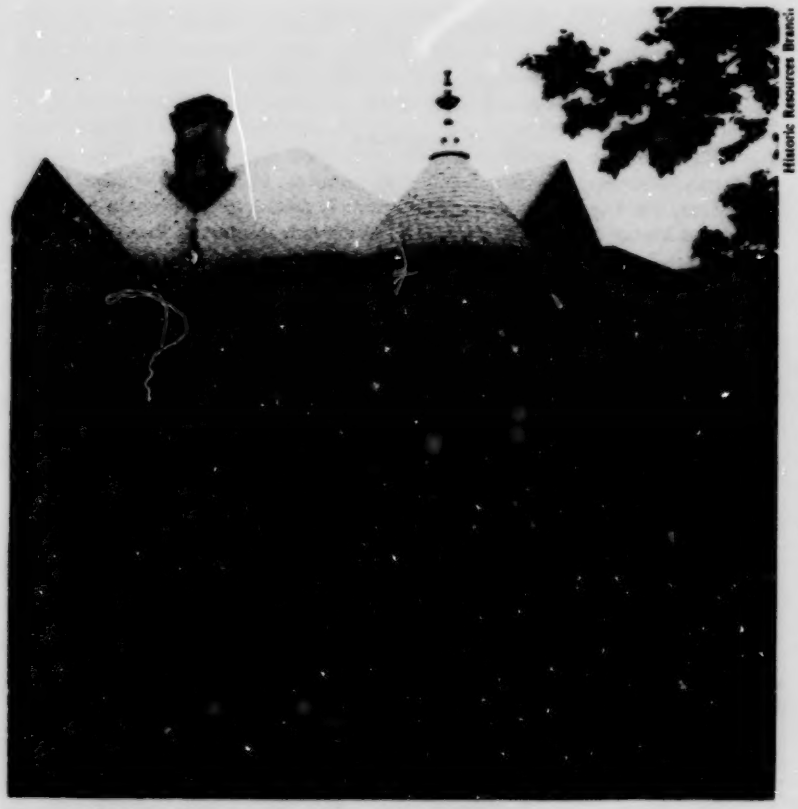
T.M. Quigley Residence, Winnipeg, erected 1883, demolished 1941.

Courtesy Manitoba Archives

John Cowles Residence, Winnipeg, erected c1891.

## Significance

The Paterson/Matheson House is an excellent example of the Eastlake style in Manitoba. The decorative elements do not seem to be of a standardized nature, and are of that type now known as "custom millwork." All such work was performed at extra cost, and made such a dwelling unique among its neighbours, even though surrounding structures might be of the same general size, massing or layout. It was not simply one in a row of look-alike houses; it was a celebration of the joys which mechanical equipment could produce — the machinery on the one hand turning out hundreds of identical brackets or verandah posts that could be used on nearly any house and then be regeared for special projects to create fancy work like that of the Paterson verandah. In Manitoba only a handful of houses such as that at 1039 Louise ever existed. Each was an individual creation, reflecting the particular personality of its builder. The Paterson/Matheson House remains both a distinctive Brandon landmark and an outstanding example of the Eastlake style of architecture in Manitoba.




Paterson/Matheson House — view of the southwest corner.

**Bibliography For Further Reading**

For a general history of settlement in Manitoba that includes information on Brandon, John Langton Tyman's *By Section, Township and Range — Studies in Prairie Settlement* is a valuable source. For an overview history of Brandon several books are useful including *Brandon: A City* by G.F. Barker; *Assiniboine Basin* by Martin Kavanagh and *Brandon — A Prospect of a City* by the Brandon Division Association, Manitoba Teacher's Society, Mary Hume, Editor.

Biographical information on George Paterson is limited although the *Brandon Daily Sun* carried a lengthy article on 31 October 1941 about his life and career. The *Brandon Building Permit Register*, located in the Manitoba Archives Building, Winnipeg, provides information on the construction of the 1904 addition to the Paterson/Matheson House, 1340 Louise Avenue and several other homes George Paterson and the Bell Brothers Contracting Firm erected in Brandon.

Information on the art of stained glass windows, particularly, "Listening" can be found in an article by Nan Shipley entitled "John Allward Stained Glass Windows," in *Canadian Collector*, January/February, 1977, pages 43-45.

For an overview and description of Queen Anne and Eastlake style of architecture, the following sources are valuable: Marc Girourard, *Sweetness and Light: The Queen Anne Movement, 1860-1900* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977); Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969); John J.G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977); Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978); John Maass *The Gingerbread Age*, (New York: Rinehart, 1957); Barbara A. Humphreys and Meredith Sykes, *The Buildings of Canada* (Montreal: Reader's Digest, 1980). A brief architectural description of the Paterson/Matheson House can also be found in *Brandon — An Architectural Walking Tour* published by the Historic Resources Branch, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation.

**Acknowledgements**

The kind assistance of Mrs. Jean Stordy of Victoria, British Columbia, is acknowledged for providing information on the Paterson/Matheson House and the life of George Paterson. Also, Mrs. Dorothy Murray of Winnipeg, provided additional information on the stained glass window "Listening."

## Paterson/Matheson House

This house was built for George A. Paterson in 1893 by Brandon's William Bell and Sons. 1039 Louise Avenue is a splendid example of the Eastlake style of architecture, which is characterized by an abundance of ornamentation produced by the chisel, gouge and lathe. Elaborately turned posts, curved brackets and spindle work are found in the handsome verandah and tower balcony. The gables are adorned with bargeboard and decorated with a semi-circle of knobs and designs cut into wood. Renovations in 1904 doubled the size of the house. A magnificent stained glass window, "Listening," designed by Winnipeg artist John Allward, was added to the second floor landing; circa 1904.

Norman A. Matheson, the owner, donated the house to the Western Region Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba in 1969.

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